

# Jungle of lies around 'Masaryk Case'

THE MASARYK CASE. By  
Claire Sterling. Harper & Row  
1970, \$7.95.

By ERIK BERT

"Are you going to write one of those cheap anti-Communist tracts?" Anna Masaryk, niece of Jan Masaryk, asked Claire Sterling.

"I don't think so," Claire replied.

"Well, then, a vulgar thriller?" Anna asked.

Anna Masaryk was wrong in one respect. The Masaryk Case, at \$7.95, is not cheap.

The Masaryk Case is a fraud on two counts. It purports to be concerned about Jan Masaryk. Despite its thousands of words about his death in 1948, the book is actually an attempt to resuscitate the remnants of the 1968 counter-revolution.

Second, it regurgitates the fraud that the so-called Prague Spring had something to do with democracy or freedom, or the like.

Claire Sterling retells the tales of Jan Masaryk's death. His death was disinterred on April 5, 1968, by the Prague magazine "Student," in a Hearst-like campaign against the Communist Party and socialism. Its assertion that it was not a suicide, that Masaryk was murdered, kept the anti-Soviet hysteria by television and radio and press at a high pitch during the Spring of 1968.

What matter that the murder allegation, according to Miss Sterling was based on a "three-year-old article in an anti-Communist Western magazine, 'Der Spiegel,' signed by an unknown journalist calling himself Michael Rand . . . who turned out to be a Czechoslovak emigre of dubious connections and uncertain financial prospects."

What matter to her that, as she admits "an exceptionally large number (of witnesses) turned out to be calculating or compulsive liars" that an "astounding amount" of the testimony she heard consisted of "half-truths, evasions, delusions, fancies, and deliberate falsehoods."

What matter that there is no piece of testimony she heard from one witness that was not denied explicitly by other witnesses.

What matter, if only the reader however confused, will accept her accusation, with which she started, that Masaryk was murdered by the Soviets or Communists.

Jan Masaryk died on March 10, 1948. What concerns Claire Sterling in 1948, however, is Feb. 20, when 12 ministers resigned from the National Front coalition cabinet headed by Klement Gottwald, Communist leader.

The 12 had hoped to incite a crisis as a result of which Gottwald would be ousted.

But they guessed wrong. Gottwald retained a majority of the cabinet, the workers' militia made it clear that the working class would block any coup by the Right.

Claire Sterling wants the reader to believe that Feb. 20, 1948 was a Communist "takeover," and "Putsch," against the "democrats." What happened was that the provocation by the 12 capitalist ministers was defeated by the Communists and the working class.

She will never forgive the Communists for that. She has her revenge. Gottwald is a "an unregenerate vulgarian and a drunk." This is standard for hack jobs about Czechoslovakia. Zdenek Fierlinger, leader of the pro-socialist Social Democrats, is a "quisling" and "pro-Communist." Czechoslovak party members who were loyal to socialism are "sectarian hacks."

And, quoting Tomas Masaryk, first president of the Czechoslovak Republic, Lenin was "crude and half-educated."

She writes that in 1968, in response to the "imperious demand for truth," the press became free "overnight," that is, anti-Soviet and anti-socialist. One can agree with her view that Alexander Dubcek's "momentous" decision that "freed the press" is "baffling."

She peddles the line that the Right Wing and the counterrevolutionaries put out in the Spring of 1968: that theirs was a "revolution for human rights," to "establish a democratic Communist order, and . . . really what they were after in

the revolution."

The goals of the "radicals" were, she wrote, to "give up (the) old Marxist ways . . . reanimate the economy with Western investment capital, dump centralized planning, introduce the profit motive and free-market prices, shift . . . foreign trade back toward the West . . . Above all, permit an organized political opposition which, not inconceivably, could put the Communist Party out of business."

She would have us believe that the choice of the Right wing was between the Party's supremacy and "democracy," whereas the choice posed by history was between Communist leadership and socialist democracy, and an anti-Communist regime and capitalist democracy.

She is cruel and bloodthirsty, in her own mean way. Czechoslovakia, she says, should have appealed for help to the U.S. between 1945 and 1948 when the U.S. had the atom bomb and the Soviet Union did not. It "wasn't altogether out of the question" that they "might have had some American support."

She wishes that the Czechoslovak government, "trying to humanize Communism," had ordered its troops to fire on the Warsaw Pact troops on Aug. 20, 1968. They might have "kept the issue open like a running sore" if Czechoslovaks had "had fought and died." Brave Claire.

There is a freedom in writing books Czechoslovakia that is enjoyed in few other areas, and Claire Sterling takes advantage of them. One can reveal the details of Kremlin meetings at the highest levels, expose the secretest Kremlin plans, retail conversations at length without the customary need for citing time, place, and source, and, when all else fails, imagine what so-and-so was thinking or not. It brings out the worst in the worst of them.

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